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**Page 1: Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant; Ruth First, 1983**

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**Page 13: Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 1963**

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## **Ruth First**

*From*

**Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant**

**1983**

# **Workers or Peasants?**



## Workers or Peasants?

This study has shown how the labour of the peasant societies of southern Mozambique was used over prolonged periods to fuel the accumulation of South African mining capital. In these three provinces, the mine recruitment system was all-pervasive. Field research teams found hardly a man of working age who had never worked a mine contract. The only men they did find were sick or disabled; or self-employed craftsmen, such as carpenters. Furthermore, men did not work occasional contracts, say, at the beginning of their working lives when they needed money to marry and to set up an independent household. On the contrary, men worked successive contracts; they worked long contracts; and they spent a large proportion of their working lives in the mines. Part II, *The Mine Labour Force*, sets out the evidence.

We have tried to show how these peasant societies, far from constituting some 'traditional' sector distinct from the so-called 'modern' sector, as dualist theory would have it, were deeply penetrated: accumulation by mining capital in the highly industrialized South African economy was based on labour extracted from these and other peasant societies in the region. In the course of this penetration, the cycles of production, distribution and consumption of the peasant economies were largely destroyed. Peasant families became dependent on wages from mine labour for their very reproduction; that is, for the purchase of the basic necessities of everyday family life. Peasant households became principally dependent on wage labour, not on the proceeds of agricultural production, for their purchase of essential instruments of production like ploughs, working oxen, grain mills, even hoes for agriculture. Likewise artisan skills and crafts were made dependent on the proceeds of mine work, for this petty commodity production became reliant on the monies earned from outside the peasant economy. Mine wages were used to purchase sewing machines, and carpentry and building tools; and the proceeds from mine work purchased the finished products from this sector. Young families in these labour-exporting areas could not establish their own households – build their homes and establish agricultural production – without access to wage work. The case studies of Maimela and Homoine explain this in detail.

Thus, as mining capital accumulation took place on the basis of labour extracted from these peasant communities, the reproduction of the peasant economies in turn became dependent on the wage income channelled back by the migrant miners. Mine wages

were needed to ensure the reproduction of the peasant economy; and that peasant economy in turn reproduced successive generations of miners.

The role of mine labour in the reproduction of peasant households of southern Mozambique can be qualified for particular years. Thus calculations of the value of agricultural produce sold by peasant households, and of the sum of mine wages, show that in 1967 the total of mine wages paid out to miners in the three southern provinces was over eight times greater than the value of marketed agricultural production in the same year.

	<i>Value of agricultural produce sold by peasant households (000 escudos)</i>	<i>Total mine wages</i>
3 Southern provinces together	85,000	717,000
Inhambane province	24,000	209,000

The process of accumulation of capital from mining depended on the extraction of labour-power of migrant workers from rural areas. This transformed the rural economy, and created the worker-peasant. These worker-peasants are not totally divorced from the means of production in the rural areas, their land and instruments; nor are they independent producers who can reproduce their households and their agricultural plots without spells of wage work. Consequently, class formation cannot be analysed either within or outside the capitalist form of relations. Not only do worker-peasants exchange their labour-power for wages, but peasant production is subordinated to and shaped by the dominant capitalist mode of production.

As a miner the migrant worker has been part of a concentrated labour force, subject to industrial work discipline, acquiring experience of labour unity and organisation. His dismissal back to the rural economy at the end of his contract imposes limitations on forms of labour organisation and action at the point of industrial production. Thus there is a continuous process of both concentration and dispersion of the labour force. Within the rural economy, this system of labour use likewise produces distinctive social forms. We have already shown the coincidence between expanded peasant production and higher wage incomes from mine labour. The differentiation into a middle and poor peasantry arises from these groups' differential reliance on wage labour, and on different wage and skill levels within the mining industry. The stratum of middle peasants is able, after a period of wage work on the mines, to sustain a certain level of agricultural production. By contrast, the poor peasants cannot withdraw from the contract cycle; their agricultural base is too poor to sustain their families without contract renewals, and they regard themselves as unemployed when not on contract. In these Southern Mozambican provinces the presence of a considerable stratum of middle peasants, often producing significant market surpluses, disposes of any notion that the invariable action in these labour peasant societies is to reduce the social formation to a mere

reserve army of labour. At the same time these peasants cannot be described as independent petty commodity producers, since acquisition of the means of production and, at times, even of sources of reproduction, derives from mine wage labour.

These specific forms of incomplete and impermanent proletarianisation, and of peasant differentiation between a middle and a poor peasantry, are not necessarily merely temporary. In the labour-exporting regions of Southern Africa, the action of mining capital in both dissolving and sustaining forms of peasant production can be expected to continue to the extent on the one hand that it serves the requirements of capital, and, on the other, that the peasant economy can sustain the continuous labour drain without the total disintegration of agricultural production.

In Mozambique's southern provinces continuous labour export throughout the twentieth century resulted in serious distortions in patterns of agricultural production. But this was not the only form of surplus extraction imposed on the peasantry by the Portuguese colonial system, for, especially after the 1940s and 1950s, as colonial economic policy impelled the production of cheap raw materials, the same producers were subjected to forced cropping of rice and cotton. Colonial policy thus demanded both forced labour and forced cropping, and never succeeded in resolving the tension between those two contradictory compulsions on the same peasantry. In almost all the areas studied, the effect of this double and combined policy of surplus extraction led to a drop in land productivity, and in the living standards of the peasants. Forced cultivation of cash crops conflicted with food-growing needs, and labour export conflicted with the disposition of labour during the agricultural season. Land which had formerly been used for groundnuts had to be given over to the production of cashew nuts for export: there was a consequent fall in the output and production of groundnuts from which the area had never recovered. The land was overtaxed by the pressures of growing food, forced cash crops, and the production of marketable crops which offered a source of cash incomes and a certain alternative to labour migration.

Any reconstruction of agriculture in independent Mozambique requires careful rethinking, and an alteration of colonial crop patterns to ensure the security and health of peasant families as well as provide them with a source of cash earnings. By the end of the colonial period, it had become abundantly clear that decades of labour export had created a male labour force which could not readily be reabsorbed into the peasant economy. This 'labour surplus' was not generated by increases in agricultural production, which had been undermined over a long period. The reabsorption of labour previously exported to the South African mines and the reconstruction of agriculture became two of the most important tasks of Mozambican society after independence.

This study of the worker-peasants of the south of Mozambique, who have been locked into both mine work and peasant household production, captures the end of an era whose demise is being ushered in by a two-fold series of events. The first has been the accession to power of Frelimo, and its commitment to restructuring the Mozambican economy and the eventual ending of migrant labour. Second, there have been two forms of labour displacement by the mining industry. These have been influenced partly by Frelimo's victory and its implications for the balance of political power in Southern Africa, but they have principally derived from changes in the pattern of capital accumulation and employment in the South African mining industry.

There have been two forms of labour displacement in mining. The first has been the substitution of capital for labour in an extended programme of mechanisation, especially in recently-developed mines. The scope for substituting machinery for labour in the South African gold mines is limited, given the cost conditions and technical requirements of deep-level South African gold mining; and technical changes will not end the industry's dependence on large numbers of African workers, but will bring about changes in the size and structure of the African labour force. According to projections for employment levels in mining for the rest of this century, employment in gold mining in South Africa will fall by about 65 per cent, from 424,992 to some 148,000 in the year 2000. The expansion of coal and base metal mining, which is increasingly exploited by open-cast and highly capital-intensive techniques, will keep total employment in mining up to its 1977 total.

The second form of labour displacement is the substitution of South African for other mine labour. The alarming projections for African unemployment in South Africa, as both industry and agriculture reduce their labour requirements, suggest that the present trend towards the internalisation of mine labour supply will be at the continuing expense of labour recruited from outside. After 1974, as has already been pointed out, the ratio between 'foreign' and South African labour was dramatically reversed. By 1976 the proportion of 'foreign' workers on the mines had dropped to 57 per cent; by 1977 it was 48 per cent; by 1979 it had fallen lower still, to 46 per cent. As the trend continues, the African labour force of the mines will be drawn increasingly from the South African 'Bantustans', especially the Transkei and the Ciskei. This does not mean that the Chamber of Mines will cease all importation of labour from the outside supply areas, but that it will perfect its strategy spreading its supply of controlled labour inputs.

These attempts to achieve a more permanent work force *within* a migrant labour system have been accompanied by changes in the industry's African wage policy. Sharp rises in the gold price following the breakdown of the Bretton-Woods fixed gold price system in 1971, together with the eruption of African mine strikes in 1972, 1973 and 1974, which have continued sporadically since then, made it necessary and possible to increase the general levels for black miners – which had been virtually unaltered since 1897. The

increase in mine wages to levels approaching those paid in industry made it possible for the mines to compete with industry for supplies of South African labour.

It was the Anglo-American Corporation which broke from the wage-fixing machinery of the Chamber of Mines and led the trend towards higher wages; and it has maintained that lead. Thus in May 1980 Anglo-American approached the heads of other mining houses to suggest that surface workers get a 58 per cent rise, and underground wages be raised as much as 120 per cent. In the event, by July 1980 the wages of African novice underground workers were increased by 15 per cent from R86.89 to R100 a month and the minimum starting wage for novice surface workers was increased by 28 per cent from R58.50 to R75 a month. For Anglo-American, which operates the newest, most capital intensive and most profitable mines, the increases were 'a disappointment and a compromise'. The increases, though a startling contrast with the wages paid African miners in the period before the higher wage policy of the 1970s, still did not reduce the differential in real terms between the lowest paid white and black miners. They also made little dent in mining profits. Thus the new wage increases would increase total mining costs by only 5.5 per cent. The mines repeated at the time of the announcement of the new wage scales that there was no shortage of African mine labour. So the present trend seems set to continue: calculated cutbacks of labour from external supply sources, and the balancing and weighing of competing areas of labour supply. In recent labour supply negotiations with supply states, the Chamber of Mines made its strategy explicit. Thus, while particular states are allocated quotas of the minimum number of labourers to be recruited in a given period, the undertaking is made conditional, that is 'subject to prevailing economic conditions'. In the formal agreement concluded in 1973 with the Lesotho Government, the clause left no room for doubt: 'The engagement of Lesotho citizens for employment in South Africa shall be subject to the availability of South African labour, and may be regulated by the South African authorities accordingly'. (Article V (b).)

The changed labour policies of the mining industry relates, of course, not only to changed supply policies, but also to the reconstitution of the African labour force itself. Here the policy is directed at what the Chamber has called 'the principle of permanence': that is, the maintenance, within a migrant labour force, of a relatively stable body of workers that will be encouraged to re-contract within its re-employment guarantee system. We have already explained the working of the Re-employment Guarantee and Early Return Bonus Certificate operated by mines affiliated to the Chamber, which gives miners repatriated after the statutory contract period an incentive to return to the same mine within a stipulated period of time. This system is being refined and extended. Miners are eligible for the certificate after one year's service; the certificate is valid for six months; and the mine worker may return to his previous mine of employment at any time within that six-month period. In other words, he is no longer required to observe an interval of

eight months between contracts. On the worker's return to the mine, he receives the rate of pay applicable to the job category he was placed before, and where possible in the same work. Further refinements still are contemplated, namely, that the worker should return on a particular date after an agreed leave period, as part of a call-in card system which until recently applied to labour from within South Africa only, but which is now being extended.

TEBA has now computerised its records for recruiting labour. This makes it easier to administer the 'permanent' employment of migrant workers. It also makes it easier to control the workforce and to discriminate selectively against workers who may incur their employers' or compound manager's displeasure, even by blacklisting them from mine labour.

For independent Mozambique, these changes in South African labour policy had a profound impact at a number of levels. After 1975 the recruitment figures dropped heavily to as little as a quarter of previous levels. The Chamber of Mines fixed a quota of 30,000 Mozambican recruits a year; the total of workers recruited in 1979 was slightly higher, just under 40,000. The recruitment of new miners virtually ceased. This was a drastic cutback, and the abrupt reduction in recruitment was combined with the crisis in agricultural production that accompanied the collapse of the former colonial state's marketing system. The result was a marked drop in the standard of living of the southern peasantry. Additionally, at the national level, the payment of premiums under the special gold clause was abolished in March 1978, as a result of the agreement by the International Monetary Fund that South Africa revalue her gold holdings and the selling price of her gold. Within three years, from 1976 to 1978, a system of labour sale which had sustained Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique for almost a century was in a state of crisis. It was symptomatic of the general crisis of the colonial economy, not least within the rural economies, with which the new Mozambican government was confronted as it took power.

Mozambique has always been heavily dependent on its agriculture: this sector accounted for perhaps 40 per cent of gross national product by 1973, and about 75 per cent of the country's commodity exports. When Frelimo came to power, the agricultural sector was disrupted by a massive exodus of Portuguese settlers. Settler agriculture had expanded rapidly after World War II and had received strong backing from the state, especially in settlement schemes such as the Limpopo *colonato*. It was the settler agriculture which used irrigation, tractors, fertilisers and improves seed, and it was this sector which practically monopolised food exports and the supply of higher quality food stuffs to the urban market. By 1970 agriculture employed some 70,000 permanent labourers and 230,000 seasonal workers, perhaps about 12 per cent of the total active population. With

the accession to power of the independence government, these settler farms were virtually wholly abandoned. There was large-scale destruction of assets; livestock was slaughtered or neglected; irrigation canals were abandoned to be clogged by silt. The breakdown of the settler agriculture sector had drastic consequences both for production and for the marketing system, since the trading network which had purchased not only the settler but also peasant crops, and which had sold basic consumer goods to the surplus-producing peasantry, had been dominated by settler interests, and was now likewise abandoned.

The colonial system thus left Mozambique with a double agricultural crisis. On the one hand the collapse of colonial agriculture meant a severe shortage of food for the towns; and on the other hand and simultaneously the peasant economy was stricken by the running down of wage labour openings and thus of sources of cash investment in agriculture, and also by the breakdown of the marketing system and thus of commercial openings for peasant produce.

The scale of the problem of the absorption of mine labour phased out by the South African mining industry can only fully be grasped by looking at the domestic employment structure inherited from the colonial period.

Colonial statistics for Mozambique are notoriously unreliable, and there are wide disparities between estimates of wage employment in various sectors; however they serve to emphasise the gravity of the post-independence unemployment problem. For manufacturing industry the wage labour force was estimated to be between 85,000 (Industrial Statistics for 1973) and 156,000 (1970 Census). The transport sector employed 60,000 wage workers; construction about 23,000; mining 6,800. Wage employment in the economy's productive sectors outside agriculture therefore amounted to little more than about 200,000, which means that by the 1970s there were almost as many, if not more, wage-earners employed outside Mozambique – in South Africa and Rhodesia – as in the domestic economy. After 1974 domestic employment fell. There were heavy cutbacks in the services sector, especially transport and tourism, and by 1976 industrial output alone dropped by 40 per cent. Though government policy was to prevent the dismissal of workers and to maintain employment levels, there was no question of expansion until the economic crisis had been weathered.

This crisis of the immediate post-colonial period actually occurred in two distinct phases. After 1974 and until the end of 1977, there were drastic falls in production and in export earnings, but not a foreign exchange and balance of payments crisis. This was because the economy benefited from the exceptionally high mine labour recruitment of 1975, and especially from the special arrangement between Portugal and South Africa (from which independent Mozambique benefited briefly), according to which deferred pay was made



available to the government of Mozambique in gold which could be resold at a higher price on international markets.

In this period, then, foreign exchange income compensated for falling export earnings. After 1977 production in some sectors began to recover, but by 1979 Mozambique was experiencing a foreign exchange crisis: South Africa ended the special arrangement for the remittance of Mozambican mine wages in gold sold at a price below international market levels. Economic recovery was getting under way, but it met a growing foreign exchange bottleneck. Exports were slowly climbing upwards, but the shortage of foreign exchange limited purchases of machinery and spares and thus expansion of both industry and agriculture.

It was clear that in the immediate and medium term, the industrial sector had an extremely limited capacity to absorb any additional workforce. This meant that for the most part the absorption of the unemployed, miners included, would have to take place in the agricultural sector.

But what kind of agricultural sector, and what kind of strategy for its transformation and development? In the first months of independence, emergency action was needed to counter the collapse in production and export earnings; to secure the supply of raw materials and food to the towns; to salvage the assets of the former settler agricultural sector; and to maintain rural wage employment. The government took over the management of most of the abandoned settler farms. In many instances individual farms were amalgamated into large production units under the direct control of the Ministry of Agriculture; in others land farmed by settlers was taken over by or handed over to local population groups to be used collectively as producer co-operatives. The creation of the state farm sector was an emergency response, but at its Third Congress in 1977 and at subsequent proceedings Frelimo adopted an explicit strategy for agriculture which called for the organisation of collective production on state farms, co-operatives, and communal villages. These production forms were to be part of what was envisaged for the socialisation of the countryside. There was to be planned integration of state sector and co-operatives; support for peasant agriculture to give a basis of stability to household production, and to encourage the production of marketed surplus and the renewal of basic agricultural services to prompt co-operativisation. The policy emphasised the transformation of peasant household production into co-operative forms aggregated in communal villages (*aldeias comunais*).

The problems of transition are, of course, far from easy. The task, as Frelimo defines it, is not only to raise production but to construct different social relations of production. That involves the dismantling of colonial forms of management and labour use. Central to the latter, of course, was the migrant labour system. Colonial profitability depended on

cheap migrant labour – it was cheap because it was labour furnished by peasantry not definitely separated from the land and which did not therefore have to rely completely on migrant wages – and on colonial cropping patterns, chiefly monocropping of tea, sugar, rice and cotton, which used seasonal labour guaranteed by the labour-recruiting mechanisms of the state.

Displacing a settler agrarian class by turning a settler farm into a state farm is a major transformation, but it does not of itself alter the profitability structure of a farm organised for monocropping, and which depended on poorly paid seasonal labour. Mechanisation on the state farms may be said to replace and thus abolish colonial forms of labour exploitation; but mechanisation tends to be labour-saving rather than labour-absorbing, and between them mechanisation and monocropping do not adequately confront rural unemployment, especially in the southern provinces, caused by the phasing out of mine labour. The state agricultural sector has therefore not only to guarantee to raise production and productivity, but also to break with colonial production patterns of low permanent labour demand with seasonal harvest peaks which can absorb only occasional labour.

Correspondingly and coincidentally, a peasant sector for which seasonal wage work was indispensable to its very reproduction needs to break from its colonial past. Dispersed household plots with elementary technology face severe, probably insuperable, limits to higher production and productivity. The solution described as the socialisation of the countryside sees co-operatives as units of collective production, and *aldeias comunais* or communal villages as centres of social accumulation, social services and cultural and political mobilisation. But in their turn agricultural producer co-operatives must be able to assure at least subsistence and also a certain surplus; even in the initial formative stage, peasant families cannot risk the diversion of their labour from their own family production to the collective plot without guarantees of co-operative production results.

Ultimately in Mozambique, but also in all the labour supply states of Southern Africa, ending the migrant labour system, and above all the export of labour to South Africa, will depend on the transformation of the conditions of production in the rural areas from which the migrant labour has been drawn. The governments of most of the supplier states – Malawi is the exception – have declared themselves to be against their continued subordination to South Africa as suppliers of migrant labour. All, too, have in some way identified rural development as a way of breaking out of this role. However, the critical issue is not one of rural development as such, but rather of the type of transformation which rural development policies tend to favour. There are perhaps only two possible paths of rural development. The first would be to encourage the emergence of cash crop production geared towards world market conditions. The production of cash crops for export would become the major focus of the development effort, and state

policies would favour those forms of production and those producers most capable of becoming successful cash-crop producers for the world market. Thus, a major proportion of state funds would be assigned to credits, agriculture extension services, marketing and the like for those capable of responding successfully to market demands. But an export-oriented cash crop economy in an impoverished labour reserve area would initiate or accelerate peasant differentiation. Resources reserved and channelled to the most successful market producers would invariably put even heavier pressure on the rest of rural producers to seek wage employment. Basically, the private appropriation of production resources by a minority of rural producers implies the separation from those productive resources of others who previously had access to them. Moreover, while agricultural production for export will provide some wage-labour employment, the evidence suggests that the restructuring of production in accordance with the norms determined by competition on world markets will be a process in which labour is shed.

The alternative to this strategy is a cooperative one, through which poor and middle peasants organise collective forms of production. This has been explicit policy in Mozambique since Frelimo's conquest of power. Experience elsewhere shows the difficulties facing such a strategy. Peasants must gain the confidence that cooperatives can provide for their material needs, and increase their production and improve their standards of living. In many countries cooperatives have become instruments of central state control over production and marketing without concomitant benefits to producers, or instruments for rich peasants to direct and control public resources for their own private ends. An appropriate strategy for cooperation must overcome these difficulties, in a situation where the reduction of employment in mining has cut the major flow of money into the rural areas of southern Mozambique. A successful cooperative strategy is the only alternative to a peasant economy which has to sell its male labour systematically over its southern frontiers. Mozambique's policies for the reconstruction of her rural economy will be critical for the future of that society. They could be as important for the future of all Southern Africa.

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On the seventeenth day of August, 1982, Ruth First was killed in her office at the Centre of African Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University, by a South African assassin's bomb.

Ruth First came to join the Centre of African Studies in 1977. Among her other activities she organised the research on Mozambican miners in South Africa which is the basis of this book, *Black Gold*.

Ruth's arrival in Mozambique began a new phase in her political and intellectual work. As an investigative journalist she had already exposed the brutal exploitation of black labour

on the South African gold mines. As a politically engaged writer she had already started to analyse the problems of independent Africa. Now, as a co-director at the Centre of African Studies, she worked to form a collective which would train Mozambicans to investigate and analyse the concrete conditions on which the advance of the socialist revolution in this country must be based.

Ruth saw her work at the University as a culmination of her personal struggle to unite political militancy and intellectual work. Intellectual work became an instrument of the revolution. This was possible because FRELIMO established the conditions in which the analysis of the problems of socialist transition could occur and because FRELIMO encouraged an intellectual practice which links the consolidation of the Mozambican revolution to the liberation of Southern Africa.

A single bomb cannot destroy the basis of Ruth's work in Mozambique nor silence her ideas. The work she began as a young journalist in South Africa and which she pursued with the work on *Black Gold* will continue in Mozambique.

Aquino de Bragança  
Director  
Centre of African Studies

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Some other books by Ruth First:

South West Africa, 1963

117 Days, 1965

The Barrel of a Gun: political power in Africa and the coup d'état, 1970

Portugal's wars in Africa, 1971

The South African Connection, 1972 (with Jonathan Steele and Christabel Gurney)

Libya, the Elusive Revolution, 1974

Olive Schreiner, 1980 (with Ann Scott)

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## The Pitfalls of National Consciousness

In an under-developed country, the setting up of dynamic district officials stops the progress whereby the towns become top-heavy, and the incoherent rush towards the cities of the mass of country people. The setting up early in the days of independence of regional organizations and officials who have full authority to do everything in their power to awaken such a region, to bring life to it and to hasten the growth of consciousness in it is a necessity from which there is no escape for a country that wishes to progress. Otherwise, the government big-wigs and the party officials group themselves around the leader. The government services swell to huge proportions, not because they are developing and specializing, but because new-found cousins and fresh militants are looking for jobs and hope to edge themselves into the government machine. And the dream of every citizen is to get up to the capital, and to have his share of the cake. The local districts are deserted; the mass of the country people with no one to lead them, uneducated and unsupported, turn their backs on their poorly-laboured fields and flock towards the outer ring of suburbs, thus swelling out of all proportion the ranks of the *lumpen-proletariat*.

The moment for a fresh national crisis is not far off. To avoid it, we think that a quite different policy should be followed: that the interior, the back-country ought to be the most privileged part of the country. Moreover, in the last resort, there is nothing inconvenient in the government choosing its seat elsewhere than in the capital. The capital must be deconsecrated; the outcast masses must be shown that we have decided to work for them. It is with this idea in mind that the government of Brazil tried to found Brazilia. The dead city of Rio de Janeiro was an insult to the Brazilian people. But, unfortunately, Brazilia is just another new capital, as monstrous as the first. The only advantage of this achievement is that, today, there exists a road through the bush to it.

No, there is no serious reason which can be opposed to the choice of another capital, or to the moving of the government as a whole towards one of the most underpopulated regions. The capital of under-developed countries is a commercial notion inherited from the colonial period. But we who are citizens of the under-developed countries, we ought to seek every occasion for contacts with the rural masses. We must create a national policy, in other words a policy for the masses. We ought never to lose contact with the people which has battled for its independence and for the concrete betterment of its existence.

The native civil servants and technicians ought not to bury themselves in diagrams and statistics, but rather in the heart of the people". They ought not to bristle up every time there is question of a move to be made to the 'interior'. We should no longer see the young women of the country threaten their husbands with divorce if they do not manage to avoid being appointed to a rural post. For these reasons, the political bureau of the party ought to treat these forgotten districts in a very privileged manner; and the life of the capital, an altogether artificial life which is stuck on to the real, national life like a foreign body ought to take up the least space possible in the life of the nation, which is sacred and fundamental.

In an under-developed country the party ought to be organized in such fashion that it is not simply content with having contacts with the masses. The party should be the direct expression of the masses. The party is not an administration responsible for transmitting government orders; it is the energetic spokesman and the incorruptible defender of the masses. In order to arrive at this conception of the party, we must above all rid ourselves of the very Western, very bourgeois and therefore contemptuous attitude that the masses are incapable of governing themselves. In fact, experience proves that the masses understand perfectly the most complicated problems. One of the greatest services that the Algerian revolution will have rendered to the intellectuals of Algeria will be to have placed them in contact with the people, to have allowed them to see the extreme, ineffable poverty of the people, at the same time allowing them to watch the awakening of the people's intelligence and the onward progress of their consciousness. The Algerian people, that mass of starving illiterates, those men and women plunged for centuries in the most appalling obscurity have held out against tanks and aeroplanes, against napalm and 'psychological services', but above all against corruption and brain-washing, against traitors and against the 'national' armies of General Bellounis. This people has held out in spite of hesitant or feeble individuals, and in spite of would-be dictators. This people has held out because for seven years its struggle has opened up for it vistas that it never dreamed existed. Today, arms factories are working in the midst of the mountains several yards underground; today, the people's tribunals are functioning at every level, and local planning commissions are organizing the division of large-scale holdings, and working out the Algeria of tomorrow. An isolated individual may obstinately refuse to understand a problem, but the group or the village understands with disconcerting rapidity. It is true that if care is taken to use only a language that is understood by graduates in law and economics, you can easily prove that the masses have to be managed from above. But if you speak the language of every day; if you are not obsessed by the perverse desire to spread confusion and to rid yourself of the people, then you will realize that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning and to learn all the tricks of the trade. If recourse is had to technical language, this signifies that it has been decided to consider the masses as uninitiated. Such a language is hard put to it to hide the lecturers' wish to cheat the people and to leave them out of things. The business of

obscuring language is a mask behind which stands out the much greater business of plunder. The people's property and the people's sovereignty are to be stripped from them at one and the same time. Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand. And if you think that you don't need them, and that on the contrary they may hinder the smooth running of the many limited liability companies whose aim it is to make the people even poorer, then the problem is quite clear.

For if you think that you can manage a country without letting the people interfere, if you think that the people upset the game by their mere presence, whether they slow it down or whether by their natural ignorance they sabotage it, then you must have no hesitation: you must keep the people out. Now, it so happens that when the people are invited to partake in the management of the country, they do not slow the movement down but on the contrary they speed it up. We Algerians have had occasion and the good fortune during the course of this war to handle a fair number of questions. In certain country districts, the politico-military leaders of the revolution found themselves in fact confronted with situations which called for radical solutions. We shall look at some of these situations.

During the years 1956-7, French colonialism had marked off certain zones as forbidden, and within these zones people's movements were strictly controlled. Thus the peasants could no longer go freely to the towns and buy provisions. During this period, the grocers made huge profits. The prices of tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco and salt soared. The black market flourished blatantly. The peasants who could not pay in money mortgaged their crops, in other words their land, or else lopped off field after field of their fathers' farms and during the second phase worked them for the grocer. As soon as the political commissioners realized the danger of the situation they reacted immediately. Thus a rational system of provisioning was instituted: the grocer who went to the town was obliged to buy from nationalist wholesalers who handed him an invoice which clearly showed the prices of the goods. When the retailer got back to the village, before doing anything else he had to go to the political commissioner who checked the invoice, decided on the margin of profit and fixed the price at which the various goods should be sold. However, the retailer soon discovered a new trick, and after three or four days declared that his stocks had run out. In fact, he went on with his business of selling on the black market on the sly. The reaction of the politico-military authorities was thorough-going. Heavy penalizations were decided on, and the fines collected were put into the village funds and used for social purposes or to pay for public works in the general interest. Sometimes it was decided to shut down the shop for a while. Then if there was a repetition of black marketeering, the business was at once confiscated and a managing committee elected to carry it on, which paid a monthly allowance to the former owner.

Taking these experiences as a starting-point, the functioning of the main laws of

economics were explained to the people, with concrete examples. The accumulation of capital ceased to be a theory and became a very real and immediate mode of behaviour. The people understood how that once a man was in trade, he could become rich and increase his turnover. Then and then only did the peasants tell the tale of how the grocer gave them loans at exorbitant interest, and others recalled how he evicted them from their land and how from owners they became labourers. The more the people understand, the more watchful they become, and the more they come to realize that finally everything depends on them and their salvation lies in their own cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests and in knowing who are their enemies. The people come to understand that wealth is not the fruit of labour but the result of organized, protected robbery. Rich people are no longer respectable people; they are nothing more than flesh-eating animals, jackals and vultures which wallow in the people's blood. With another end in view the political commissioners have had to decide that nobody will work for anyone else any longer. The land belongs to those that till it. This is a principle which has through explanation become a fundamental law of the Algerian revolution. The peasants who used to employ agricultural labourers have been obliged to give a share of the land to their former employees.

So it may be seen that production per acre trebled, in spite of the many raids by the French, in spite of bombardments from the air, and the difficulty of getting manures. The *fellahs* who at harvest-time were able to judge and weigh the crops thus obtained wanted to know whence came such a phenomenon; and they were quick to understand that the idea of work is not as simple as all that, that slavery is opposed to work, and that work presupposes liberty, responsibility and consciousness.

In those districts where we have been able to carry out successfully these interesting experiments, where we have watched man being created by revolutionary beginnings, the peasants have very clearly caught hold of the idea that the more intelligence you bring to your work, the more pleasure you will have in it. We have been able to make the masses understand that work is not simply the output of energy, nor the functioning of certain muscles, but that people work more by using their brains and their hearts than with only their muscles and their sweat. In the same way in these liberated districts which are at the same time excluded from the old trade routes we have had to modify production, which formerly looked only towards the towns and towards export. We have organized production to meet consumers' needs for the people and for the units of the national army of liberation. We have quadrupled the production of lentils and organized the manufacture of charcoal. Green vegetables and charcoal have been sent through the mountains from the north to the south, whereas the southern districts send meat to the north. This coordination was decided upon by the F.L.N. and they it was who set up the system of communications. We did not have any technicians or planners coming from big Western universities; but in these liberated regions the daily ration went up to the hitherto unheard-of figure of 3,200 calories. The people were not content with coming



triumphant out of this test. They started asking themselves theoretical questions: for example, why did certain districts never see an orange before the war of liberation, while thousands of tons are exported every year abroad? Why were grapes unknown to a great many Algerians whereas the European peoples enjoyed them by the million? Today, the people have a very clear notion of what belongs to them. The Algerian people today know that they are the sole owners of the soil and mineral wealth of their country. And if some individuals do not understand the unrelenting refusal of the F.L.N. to tolerate any encroachment on this right of ownership, and its fierce refusal to allow any compromise on principles, they must one and all remember that the Algerian people is today an adult people, responsible and fully conscious of its responsibilities. In short, the Algerians are men of property.

If we have taken the example of Algeria to illustrate our subject, it is not at all with the intention of glorifying our own people, but simply to show the important part played by the war in leading them towards consciousness of themselves. It is clear that other peoples have come to the same conclusion in different ways. We know for sure today that in Algeria the test of force was inevitable; but other countries through political action and through the work of clarification undertaken by a party have led their people to the same results. In Algeria, we have realized that the masses are equal to the problems which confront them. In an under-developed country, experience proves that the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if it takes them twice or three times as long. The fact is that the time taken up by explaining, the time 'lost' in treating the worker as a human being, will be caught up in the execution of the plan. People must know where they are going, and why. The politician should not ignore the fact that the future remains a closed book so long as the consciousness of the people remains imperfect, elementary and cloudy. We African politicians must have very clear ideas on the situation of our people. But this clarity of ideas must be profoundly dialectical. The awakening of the whole people will not come about at once; the people's work in the building of the nation will not immediately take on its full dimensions: first because the means of communication and transmission are only beginning to be developed; secondly because the yardstick of time must no longer be that of the moment or up till the next harvest, but must become that of the rest of the world, and lastly because the spirit of discouragement which has been deeply rooted in people's minds by colonial domination is still very near the surface. But we must not overlook the fact that victory over those weaknesses which are the heritage of the material and spiritual domination of the country by another is a necessity from which no government will be able to escape. Let us take the example of work under the colonial regime. The settler never stopped complaining that the native is slow. Today, in certain countries which have become independent, we hear the ruling classes taking up the same cry. The fact is that the settler wanted the native to be enthusiastic. By a sort of process of mystification which constitutes the most sublime type of separation from reality, he wanted to

persuade the slave that the land that he worked belonged to him, that the mines where he lost his health were owned by him. The settler was singularly forgetful of the fact that he was growing rich through the death-throes of the slave. In fact what the settler was saying to the native was 'Kill yourself that I may become rich'. Today, we must behave in a different fashion. We ought not to say to the people: 'Kill yourselves that the country may become rich.' If we want to increase the national revenue, and decrease the importing of certain products which are useless, or even harmful, if we want to increase agricultural production and overcome illiteracy, we must explain what we are about. The people must understand what is at stake. Public business ought to be the business of the public. So the necessity of creating a large number of well-informed nuclei at the bottom crops up again. Too often, in fact, we are content to establish national organizations at the top and always in the capital: the Women's Union, the Young People's Federation, Trade Unions, etc. But if one takes the trouble to investigate what is behind the office in the capital, if you go into the inner room where the reports ought to be, you will be shocked by the emptiness, the blank spaces, and the bluff. There must be a basis; there must be cells that supply content and life. The masses should be able to meet together, discuss, propose and receive directions. The citizens should be able to speak, to express themselves and to put forward new ideas. The branch meeting and the committee meeting are liturgical acts. They are privileged occasions given to a human being to listen and to speak. At each meeting, the brain increases its means of participation and the eye discovers a landscape more and more in keeping with human dignity.

The large proportion of young people in the under-developed countries raises specific problems for the government, which must be tackled with lucidity. The young people of the towns, idle and often illiterate, are a prey to all sorts of disintegrating influences. It is to the youth of an under-developed country that the industrialized countries most often offer their pastimes.

Normally, there is a certain homogeneity between the mental and material level of the members of any given society and the pleasures which that society creates for itself. But in under-developed countries, young people have at their disposal leisure occupations designed for the youth of capitalist countries: detective novels, penny-in-the slot machines, sexy photographs, pornographic literature, films banned to those under sixteen, and above all alcohol. In the West, the family circle, the effects of education and the relatively high standard of living of the working classes provide a more or less efficient protection against the harmful action of these pastimes. But in an African country, where mental development is uneven, where the violent collision of two worlds has considerably shaken old traditions and thrown the universe of the perceptions out of focus, the impressionability and sensibility of the young African are at the mercy of the various assaults made upon them by the very nature of Western culture. His family very often proves itself incapable of showing stability and homogeneity when faced with such attacks.

In this domain, the government's duty is to act as a filter and a stabilizer. But the Youth Commissioners in under-developed countries often make the mistake of imagining their role to be that of Youth Commissioners in frilly developed countries. They speak of strengthening the soul, of developing the body, and of facilitating the growth of sportsmanlike qualities. It is our opinion that they should beware of these conceptions. The young people of an under-developed country are above all idle: occupations must be found for them. For this reason the Youth Commissioners ought for practical purposes to be attached to the Ministry for Labour. The Ministry for Labour, which is a prime necessity in an under-developed country, functions in collaboration with the Ministry for Planning, which is another necessary institution in under-developed countries. The youth of Africa ought not to be sent to sports stadiums but into the fields and into the schools. The stadium ought not to be a show place erected in the towns, but a bit of open ground in the midst of the fields that the young people must reclaim, cultivate and give to the nation. The capitalist conception of sport is fundamentally different from that which should exist in an under-developed country. The African politician should not be preoccupied with turning out sportsmen, but with turning out fully conscious men, who play games as well. If games are not integrated into the national life, that is to say in the building of the nation, and if you turn out national sportsmen and not fully conscious men, you will very quickly see sport rotted by professionalism and commercialism. Sport should not be a pastime or a distraction for the bourgeoisie of the towns. The greatest task before us is to understand at each moment what is happening in our country. We ought not to cultivate the exceptional or to seek for a hero, who is another form of leaden. We ought to uplift the people; we must develop their brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings.

We once more come up against that obsession of ours - which we would like to see shared by all African politicians - about the need for effort to be well-informed, for work which is enlightened and free from its historic intellectual darkness. To hold a responsible position in an under-developed country is to know that in the end everything depends on the education of the masses, on the raising of the level of thought, and on what we are too quick to call 'political teaching'.

In fact, we often believe with criminal superficiality that to educate the masses politically is to deliver a long political harangue from time to time. We think that it is enough that the leader or one of his lieutenants should speak in a pompous tone about the principle events of the day for them to have fulfilled this bounden duty to educate the masses politically. Now, political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is 'to invent souls'. To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous

man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. In order to put all this into practice, in order really to incarnate the people, we repeat that there must be decentralization in the extreme. The movement from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top should be a fixed principle, not through concern for formalism but because simply to respect this principle is the guarantee of salvation. It is from the base that forces mount up which supply the summit with its dynamic, and make it possible dialectically for it to leap ahead. Once again we Algerians have been quick to understand these facts, for no member of the government at the head of any recognized state has had the chance of availing himself of such a mission of salvation. For it is the rank-and-file who are fighting in Algeria, and the rank-and-file know well that without their daily struggle, hard and heroic as it is, the summit would collapse; and in the same way those at the bottom know that without a head and without leadership the base would split apart in incoherence and anarchy. The summit only draws its worth and its strength from the existence of the people at war. Literally, it is the people who freely create a summit for themselves, and not the summit that tolerates the people.

The masses should know that the government and the party are at their service. A deserving people, in other words a people conscious of its dignity, is a people that never forgets these facts. During the colonial occupation the people were told that they must give their lives so that dignity might triumph. But the African peoples quickly came to understand that it was not only the occupying power that threatened their dignity. The African peoples were quick to realize that dignity and sovereignty were exact equivalents, and, in fact, a free people living in dignity is a sovereign people. It is no use demonstrating that the African peoples are childish or weak. A government or a party gets the people it deserves and sooner or later a people gets the government it deserves.

Practical experience in certain regions confirms this point of view. It sometimes happens at meetings that militants use sweeping, dogmatic formulae. The preference for this shortcut, in which spontaneity and over-simple sinking of differences dangerously combine to defeat intellectual elaboration, frequently triumphs. When we meet this shirking of responsibility in a militant it is not enough to tell him he is wrong. We must make him ready for responsibility, encourage him to follow up his chain of reasoning and make him realize the true nature, often shocking, inhuman and in the long run sterile, of such over-simplification.

Nobody, neither leader nor rank-and-file, can hold back the truth. The search for truth in local attitudes is a collective affair. Some are richer in experience, and elaborate their thought more rapidly, and in the past have been able to establish a greater number of mental links. But they ought to avoid riding rough shod over the people, for the success of the decision which is adopted depends upon the coordinated, conscious effort of the whole of the people. No one can get out of the situation scot free. Everyone will be butchered or tortured; and in the framework of the independent nation everyone will go

hungry and everyone will suffer in the slump. The collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the top. Yes; everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; there are no innocents and no onlookers. We all have dirty hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the terrifying emptiness of our brains. Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.

The duty of those at the head of the movement is to have the masses behind them. Allegiance presupposes awareness and understanding of the mission which has to be fulfilled; in short, an intellectual position, however embryonic. We must not voodoo the people, nor dissolve them in emotion and confusion. Only those under-developed countries led by revolutionary *elites* who have come up from the people can today allow the entry of the masses upon the scene of history. But, we must repeat, it is absolutely necessary to oppose vigorously and definitively the birth of a national bourgeoisie and a privileged caste. To educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens. As President Sekou Toure aptly remarked in his message to the second congress of African writers:

“In the realm of thought, man may claim to be the brain of the world; but in real life where every action affects spiritual and physical existence, the world is always the brain of mankind; for it is at this level that you will find the sum total of the powers and units of thought, and the dynamic forces of development and improvement; and it is there that energies are merged and the sum of man's intellectual values is finally added together.”

Individual experience, because it is national and because it is a link in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world. In the same way that during the period of armed struggle each fighter held the fortune of the nation in his hand, so during the period of national construction each citizen ought to continue in his real, everyday activity to associate himself with the whole of the nation, to incarnate the continuous dialectical truth of the nation and to will the triumph of man in his completeness here and now. If the building of a bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, then that bridge ought not to be built and the citizens can go on swimming across the river or going by boat. The bridge should not be 'parachuted down' from above; it should not be imposed by a *deus ex machina* upon the social scene; on the contrary it should come from the muscles and the brains of the citizens. Certainly, there may well be need of engineers and architects, sometimes completely foreign engineers and architects; but the local party leaders should be always present, so that the new techniques can make their way into the cerebral desert of the citizen, so that the bridge in whole and in part can be taken up and conceived, and the responsibility for it assumed by the citizen. In this way, and in this way only, everything is possible.

A government which calls itself a national government ought to take responsibility for the totality of the nation; and in an under-developed country the young people represent one of the most important sectors. The level of consciousness of young people must be raised; they need enlightenment. If the work of explanation had been carried on among the youth of the nation, and if the Young People's National Union had carried out its task of integrating them into the nation, those mistakes would have been avoided which have threatened or already undermined the future of the Latin American Republics. The army is not always a school of war; more often, it is a school of civic and political education. The soldier of an adult nation is not a simple mercenary but a citizen who by means of arms defends the nation. That is why it is of fundamental importance that the soldier should know that he is in the service of his country and not in the service of his commanding officer, however great that officer's prestige may be. We must take advantage of the national military and civil service in order to raise the level of the national consciousness, and to detribalize and unite the nation. In an under-developed country every effort is made to mobilize men and women as quickly as possible; it must guard against the danger of perpetuating the feudal tradition which holds sacred the superiority of the masculine element over the feminine. Women will have exactly the same place as men, not in the clauses of the constitution but in the life of every day: in the factory, at school and in the parliament. If in the Western countries men are shut up in barracks, that is not to say that this is always the best procedure. Recruits need not necessarily be militarized. The national service may be civil or military, and in any case it is advisable that every able-bodied citizen can at any moment take his place in a fighting unit for the defence of national and social liberties.

It should be possible to carry out large-scale undertakings in the public interest by using recruited labour. This is a marvellous way of stirring up inert districts and of making known to a greater number of citizens the needs of their country. Care must be taken to avoid turning the army into an autonomous body which sooner or later, finding itself idle and without any definite mission, will 'go into politics' and threaten the government. Drawing-room generals, by dint of haunting the corridors of government departments, come to dream of manifestoes. The only way to avoid this menace is to educate the army politically, in other words to nationalize it. In the same way another urgent task is to increase the militia. In case of war, it is the whole nation which fights and works. It should not include any professional soldiers, and the number of permanent officers should be reduced to a minimum. This is in the first place because officers are very often chosen from the university class, who could be much more useful elsewhere; an engineer is a thousand times more indispensable to his country than an officer; and secondly, because the crystallization of the caste spirit must be avoided. We have seen in the preceding pages that nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a programme. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be

taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness. The nation does not exist except in a programme which has been worked out by revolutionary leaders and taken up with full understanding and enthusiasm by the masses. The nation's effort must constantly be adjusted into the general background of underdeveloped countries. The battle-line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligences of men and women. The work of the masses and their will to overcome the evils which have for centuries excluded them from the mental achievements of the past ought to be grafted on to the work and will of all under-developed peoples. On the level of underdeveloped humanity there is a kind of collective effort, a sort of common destiny. The news which interests the Third World does not deal with King Baudouin's marriage nor the scandals of the Italian ruling class. What we want to hear about are the experiments carried out by the Argentinians or the Burmese in their efforts to overcome illiteracy or the dictatorial tendencies of their leaders. It is these things which strengthen us, teach us and increase our efficiency ten times over. As we see it, a programme is necessary for a government which really wants to free the people politically and socially. There must be an economic programme; there must also be a doctrine concerning the division of wealth and social relations. In fact, there must be an idea of man and of the future of humanity; that is to say that no demagogic formula and no collusion with the former occupying power can take the place of a programme. The new peoples, unawakened at first but soon becoming more and more clear-minded, will make strong demands for this programme. The African people and indeed all under-developed peoples, contrary to common belief, very quickly build up a social and political consciousness. What can be dangerous is when they reach the stage of social consciousness before the stage of nationalism. If this happens, we find in under-developed countries fierce demands for social justice which paradoxically are allied with often primitive tribalism. The under-developed peoples behave like starving creatures; this means that the end is very near for those who are having a good time in Africa. Their government will not be able to prolong its own existence indefinitely. A bourgeoisie that provides nationalism alone as food for the masses fails in its mission and gets caught up in a whole series of mishaps. But if nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley. The bourgeois leaders of under-developed countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness. Then the flag and the palace where sits the government cease to be the symbols of the nation. The nation deserts these brightly lit, empty shells and takes shelter in the country, where it is given life and dynamic power. The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. The collective building up of a destiny is the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale. Otherwise there is anarchy,

repression and the resurgence of tribal parties and federalism. The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts. No leader, however valuable he may be, can substitute himself for the popular will; and the national government, before concerning itself about international prestige, ought first to give back their dignity to all citizens, fill their minds and feast their eyes with human things, and create a prospect that is human because conscious and sovereign men dwell therein.

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